



Intense relationship

GW: Can you tell me what the thinking was behind the Intensified Civil Military Co-operation (ICMC)? What do the various departments get out of it?

AK: Intensified Co-operation started several years ago in 2005, and even before that when, after 911, everyone in Holland thought, "What if it happened here? What should we do?" In 2005 the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Defence and Justice made an agreement about the way defence forces could support the civil authorities. During that same period the Minister of Defence went through a reform looking at its civil affairs, military police, coast guard, etc, and in that topic was also CBRN. ICMC does not provide forces that are just for civil affairs; they are normal operational forces that we provide to civil affairs. If a force is in Holland they can do things for civil affairs, but if they are on expedition they are kept out of it. We only have normal forces at the moment, if they are in the Netherlands then they are usable for ICMC

GW: That raises questions of whether there will be specialist training for Civil Military Co-operation (Cimic) operations. Will it be a two-tier system, with some troops trained to a different level, or will everyone get the same amount?

AK: We support civilian operations with what we have at the moment. With CBRN, the problem was that Minister Of Internal Affairs was a guaranteed unit; in Holland we don't have that much CBRN and it is for operational purposes. So if they want us to provide them with a guaranteed unit then they want more of the same as we already have. As we envision it, the MoD should also be able to send these units to the territories that we want to go on expedition to. So what we are doing is making an expeditionary one and one for ICMC. The only way we could guarantee their CBRN support was by making a new unit. These two units together will guarantee the ICMC task. One of them is operational the other one is, at that time, ICMC tasked - or visa versa.

GW: But the critical question is: who funds it?

AK: The new unit is funded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and for that money we guarantee the capacity they asked for. They asked for a packaged response: a recce and sampling team and decon units. The response package they asked for is Advice & Assistance (Liason) and recce. The response team they get is Advice & Assistance (Liason) and recce and sampling team.

GW: Do you have set response times?

AK: They asked for: Response leaving their barracks within 2 hours and decon to leave the barracks within 24 hours. We only get involved if the civil authorities don't have equipment or people enough. We don't take over; we are backup.

GW: Is it the case that major cities, such as Maastricht or Amsterdam, already have competent CBRN defence units, and that you therefore have no role there? Are you mainly for the rural or town areas?

AK: We do both. If we are ordered to a place of incident by our MOD But again we will only come in if their capacity is not enough or cannot be sustained. If they have a shortage of capacity..

GW: Funding for these sorts of capabilities can be an unknown quantity. Does the Ministry of Internal Affairs pay the soldiers' salaries, their accommodation, the training facilities, the equipment, etc? What exactly are they paying for?

AK: Currently we have not yet talked about what the costs are in the case of them asking for troops. They have asked for a capacity; we have offered it to them and it will cost them an agreed amount.

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Major Ad Kocx, head of the ICMC CBRN Project Group for the Dutch Army, tells Gwyn Winfield about their new civil/military plan

The Ministry is paying for the things they have asked for. This is guaranteed response leaving the barracks within 2 hours and guaranteed decon leaving the barracks within 24 hours. This is brought together in a unit. In the unit are more than one response and decon unit so it can sustain the guaranteed support for a longer period.

GW: Where is the payoff for the Dutch MoD? Is it a good deal, as they can now gain economy of scale for the equipment? Does the experience of ICMC CBRN troops in mass decon and other roles have a benefit for expeditionary CIMIC?

AK: Maybe, but we are doing more of the same as we do with the military. We already have decon, mass decon and recce in our CBRN Company.

The training capability is being created in the school – so some ICMC units will be brought in and have lectures from Police and Fire, and there will be some ICMC officers in the Dutch MoD Center of Expertise to advise in civil affairs.

GW: It can't just have the cookie cutter applied to it, however. There are specific differences between civilian and military mass decontamination, for example; civilians won't follow orders and there are ethnic and religious problems about being cleaned by people from another group...

AK: You are right, but the decon unit is only there after 24 hours, so hopefully everyone will be decontaminated by then. We will have to train together but we won't be taking over; we will assist and back up. The fire brigade will still stay responsible and we will be there to back them up.

GW: Presumably it will sometimes be quicker to deploy a complete military force package to some areas – for instance if it is near a military base – than bringing the various civil agencies together piecemeal. So will civilians always take primacy?

AK: Yes. We are only brought in if the civilian agencies call us in. So the first responders, fire, police and ambulance will deal with it, and after that if it is too much they will call the military in. At the moment in the fire brigades we already have decon units, and those decon units

will be answering the threats. At the moment the fire brigades have six NBC units that can respond to a CBRN incident and only if they don't have enough equipment do we come in.

GW: In terms of the military response, do the personnel you contribute once they become part of ICMC remain part of it, or do they rotate in and out?

AK: At the moment we are building a unit. We have one at the moment, but a similar unit will be built next to it, so we will have two. We have a timescale for deployment and that can be 6-9 months depending on operations – they will rotate on ICMC and normal tasks. We have three tasks at the moment for all units: the traditional [Nato] Article 5 tasks; the new expeditionary option; and this national option. So one unit will do the first two, and the other will do the national option, but they will be trained and educated on all three.

GW: In terms of your recce role, what do you offer that the civilian forces can't? Do you have a greater range of detectors, higher specificity...?

AK: The units will have a bigger range, but also more protection. For example, with the Fuchs vehicles they can go into the territory protected. This in contrast with the fire brigades which do it in full PPE. They also have more specific and faster detectors.

GW: In terms of the development and future path of the recce force, could you see them using soft-skinned vehicles with over-pressure, etc. for the civilian role, as things like Fuchs have both a psychological impact but are also over-engineered for the civilian role...

AK: That is correct, but one precondition from the MoD was that both units must have the same materiel for operations and ICMC. So if a soft-skinned vehicle is introduced, it also has to be usable for operations. You then come onto the choice of military vehicles – is it air-transportable, light, IED-proof, etc. and all those decisions. This is a responsibility of the MoD.

GW: ICMC is larger than just CBRN, but will we see other disciplines, such as EOD, merge together in the way that they do for expeditionary operations?

AK: That is already in our way of thinking. When we think about CBRN IED, EOD have to go in and they are calling us in to make sure that they have detection and decon units behind them.

GW: As a generalisation, will ICMC be a force for change? Will it result in a more "business as usual" approach or revolutionise military CBRN units?

AK: I think it will help revolutionise CBRN defence. It is a new way of thinking and we need to work with people who think differently from us. So if we have to work together with the civilians we need to know what they know and develop standard operating procedures (SOPs), some of which we might use in our expeditionary efforts. As well as the new unit we are also building a training facility that will be part of the ICMC agreement. There we will train civilian and military CBRN personnel. In that way we can do multi-disciplinary training for both parts and synchronise our SOPs. We will offer civilians the opportunity to train with us. In terms of the specialist part of it, they will have to do it themselves; they will need to bring their instructors, but we will facilitate the exercises.

GW: Are you still planning to have the force ready by 1 January 2012? Are you still on track?

AK: Yes and yes! The training facility will be ready before that as we have to train together to work our units up to that level. That will be live by 1 January 2011.

GW: Are you going to be able to rethink some military mores? For example, your response time would suggest there will be little dermal threat, meaning that you could shed elements of your IPE. Or will it be traditional response in typical military IPE?

AK: Normally as the Commander I would say we would go in full IPE, but during tasks we are always underneath civilian authority, and it depends on what they want. If the Mayor asks for us and says "You cannot come in in your full IPE," then we are not allowed in. We are totally underneath the civilian authority.

GW: Well that should present some interesting training and doctrinal challenges!

AK: Yes! I am very busy at the moment!